

"STILL WITH THE SAME PEOPLE?"

By DEEMS TAYLOR

Why Do You Always Feel Obligated to Sit Down and Talk to the Bore-some Acquaintances You Happen Across in the Subway?



JUST how long he had been there I don't know. The subway train was just pulling out of 145th Street when I glanced up from my paper and noticed him sitting opposite me. I shuddered, and looked away hastily, reopened the paper and plunged resolutely into the business troubles. But it was no use. That one fleeting glance had been sufficient to bow my shoulders with care. I was face to face with a great problem, and I would know no peace until I had solved it.

Had I or had I not met that man before? I was sure I had, but where? I stole another look, and my heart sank. Yes, whoever he was, he was some one I knew, and before long I was going to be sitting beside him, desperately trying to think of something to say.

I don't know why, whenever I see a man in the middle distance whom I know, or fear that I know, I should have an irresistible impulse to sit down beside him and talk to him. But I do, always. When I was very young, too young to be at all hazy about whom I just did and did not know, I used to laugh at the tales about the serpent of the jungle and how he captures little birds and rabbits by holding them spell-bound with the gaze of his glittering eye. But I am older now, and credulous, and I don't laugh any more. In fact, I am prepared to write a detailed account of the feelings of one of those rabbits

as the serpent hypnotizes him. The eye of a nodding acquaintance has the same awful power over me.

"Huntensres naigs," observed the guard, slamming the doors. If only I could avoid that man's eye until we reached Ninety-sixth Street! The car would fill then; there would be no vacant seat left beside either of us, and I should be saved.

I went back to my paper. I read the shipping news and the tide tables; I read the court calendars; I read naval orders and the movements of warships; I read advertisements bearing glad tidings of certain miraculous bargains to be had in foulards and genuine cotton blankets, and other advertisements pointing out the inestimable eupletic properties of Swallowtail tobacco; I read some war dispatches almost through. I even read a few want ads, remarking without surprise that several firms were still anxious to employ first-class bushelman. What a bushelman is I don't know—the name always had a vague Australian sound to me. Whatever he is, he is a much-sought citizen. If ever I am compelled to drop newspaper work and earn my own living, I shall take a course of lessons and become a bushelman. There seems to be a perpetual and never satisfied demand for good ones.

But my reading was not a success. I could not keep my wandering attention fixed. Ever, in the back of my mind, an unanswered question gnawed and gnawed: Who was that fellow across the aisle? I ventured another glance. Yes, somewhere I had met the owner of that

face. I ran rapidly through my list of acquaintances. No clew. Had I, perchance—

One Hundred and Third Street! If I could only keep from looking at him for two minutes more! There was no use in trying the paper again; I already knew whole pages of it by heart. Perhaps the car cards might help. I would probably be violating no one's privacy if I read them.

I glanced idly over his head, humming a tune the while. WHY NOT BUY ONE OF OUR \$1,500 GUARANTEED NON-REFILLABLE FIRST MORTGAGE BONDS? pleaded the card. Too easy. I knew the answer to that one right away. I tried another. HAVE YOU A LITTLE BANSHEE IN YOUR HOME? was the first line. Really, I thought, this is too much. Do these people think I have nothing better to do than sit around filling in questionnaires? One might think that—

Lost! In a moment of abstraction I had let my gaze fall until it rested full upon the face of my man of mystery. And as I sat, frozen with terror, I saw him grow conscious of being looked at, saw him glance up, saw his eye light with growing recognition. He smiled and nodded. One of us, at least, was glad to see the other.

"Nice ixtree!" yelled the guard. But it was too late. The unknown had crossed the aisle and was sitting down at my side.

"How's the boy?" he said.

I grasped his hand and shook it warmly. "Fine, thanks!"

"How's everything?"

"Fine, thanks!"

It struck me that there was a growing monotony about my conversation. Besides, he was asking all the questions, thereby putting the burden of saying bright things entirely up to me. This was obviously unfair, and must be stopped. I leaped into the dialogical breach.

"How are you?" I said modestly.

"Fine, thanks!"

Aha! I had him on the run. Greatly encouraged, I got off another good one. "That's good," I said.

Then I had another inspiration.

"How're they coming?"

"Oh, pretty good. I can't complain. How you getting along?"

Confound the fellow! Why did he keep asking these personal questions?

However, I was his match. I thought carefully, and then replied:

"Oh, pretty good. I can't complain, either." Another bright line came to

me. "They might be better and they might be worse."

The guard came to the rescue. "Gransent!" was his contribution. This, coupled with my last observation, seemed to nonplus my companion, for he was silent until the train had pulled out of the station. Then he turned, and again addressed me.

"Still with the same people?"

I pondered. "Yes," I said, finally.

"Yes. I suppose you are."

He seemed surprised. "Oh, no. Been in for myself four years now."

Well, I hadn't made much of a success of that. I tried again.

"You don't say! Well, that certainly is fine! I hadn't heard about it. What line you in?"

He appeared even more surprised, and a little resentful.

"Why, the same line I was always in. I just quit the job and went in for myself, that's all."

"Oh."

There was a long silence, broken only by the whirr of the ventilating fans, the yells of a fretful infant and the roar of the train. He was apparently lost in thought, while I was once more desperately trying to figure out who under the sun he might be and where I could have met him. I turned to have another look at him, and caught him in the act of turning to have another good look at me. My heart leaped. Perhaps he, too, was as much in the dark as I was.

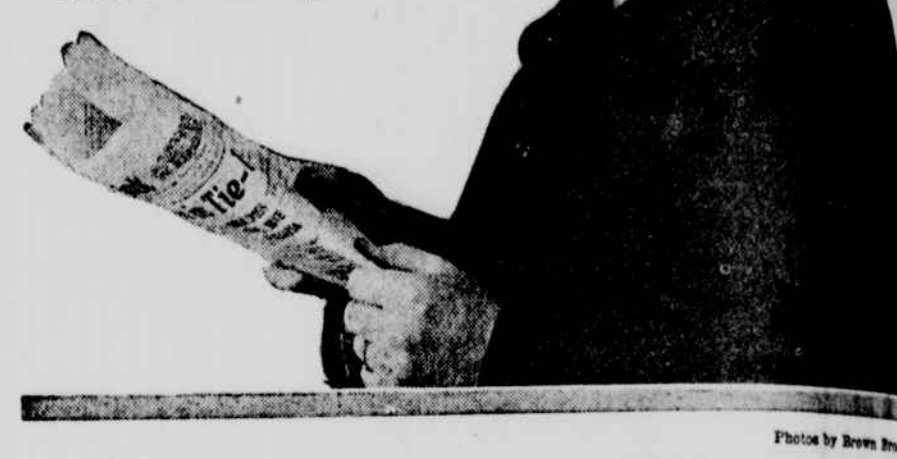
Why not make a clean breast of things and begin life anew?

"Look here, old man, I've met you somewhere, I know, but I haven't the slightest idea where, and I don't know who you are, and you don't know where you met me, either, nor who I am. Obviously, we have nothing in common. Our conversation shows that. I'm sure nothing I could say would be of the slightest interest to you, and I must say your affairs mean less than nothing to me. Why not acknowledge the fact like men? Let's stop boring each other, and sit on opposite sides of the car and be at peace."

I fancied myself saying this. But I didn't speak. I lacked the courage. Instead, I tapped my folded newspaper lightly and carelessly hummed a merry little tune, to show how completely at ease I was. Also, I glanced casually about the car and read a couple more of the interrogatory car cards.

Again the guard broke in upon our chat. "Fawtnstree!" he announced. My companion waited until we were well under way again and conversation

There's No Use in Reading Your Paper or in Pretending to Study the Car Cards; Sooner or Later the Bore Will Catch Your Eye.



was correspondingly difficult. Then he spoke.

"Seen the old man lately?" he howled. Now who the deuce was the old man, and why should I have seen him lately? Why couldn't the fool have left matters as they were, instead of dragging in some septuagenarian whom I never heard of? However, something in the way of a reply was obviously expected of me. So I rallied gamely.

"No."

"He was asking about you only last week. Asked me if I'd seen you lately, and I said I hadn't."

This was serious. Evidently the old man had been flattening his nose on the window pane for weeks, waiting for me to heave in sight, and here I not only hadn't hove, but didn't even know who he was. I was ashamed—I admit it frankly—and resolved to make what reparation I could. So I explained.

"No, I haven't seen him."

"Why don't you drop in and see the old man some day? He often asks about you, and was asking only the other day if I'd seen you lately."

"I certainly will."

And, indeed, I would have been glad to—I even resolved to drop in and see him that very day. But it did seem silly, now that the conversation had gone so far, to say, "By the way, who is the old man?" So I didn't, and for all I know the old man is waiting yet.

"Brooklyn Bridge!" shouted the guard clearly, thereby breaking the world's record for calling out the running broad station.

I arose. "Well, here's where I bade it," I remarked jocosely.

We shook hands.

"Mighty glad to have seen you, old man."

"Thanks. Mighty glad to have seen you."

"Hope I'll see you again some time."

"Yes. If you're ever down 'round my way, drop in."

"Thanks. I'll do that little thing."

"Say," he added, as I turned to go, "let's get together some day for lunch."

"All right, let's do that."

"Fine! Let me know ahead and I'll get hold of the old man. Gimme a ring some day, will you?"

"I'll do that." Ah, now I would find him out! I would get his telephone number, call up Information and ask her who he was. I spoke craftily.

"I'll call you this week. Where'll you get you?"

"Oh, just gimme a ring. I'm in the book, you know."

And so we parted. I've often thought of him since, though. I want to go out to lunch with him, not so much for the sake of his conversation—I know he's forthcoming about what that will be—to see the old man. Several times I thought I had him identified, but his name evades me. If you'd say it to me I'd know it the minute I heard it. You know how it is.

Still, he's in the book. I have that much to go by. And so I have started looking for him there. I've been at it two weeks now, and I'm nearly through the C's. Some day I shall find him.

BELASCO THE WINDOW-TRIMMER

By Courtesy of "The New Republic."

IF YOU make a popular success of your profession, as Mr. David Belasco has done in the theatre, it almost proves to certain idealistic souls that you are spiritually corrupt. To be entirely satisfactory to these tender consciences you must be a little beyond the pale. There is a distinction for them between principle and expediency, and expediency, as they see it, is probably unprincipled. They base their suspicion of you on the ground that you have made terms with the world as it is. You are a "practical man."

There is a sound distinction, obviously, between a statesman and a politician, one that goes far beyond the region of governmental affairs and that applies to any man who has a public to engage or consult. This distinction does not turn, however, on a man's practical aspiration to public favor. About statesmanship there is a general misconception derived in all likelihood from memorial sculpture and not in the least made real because it imposes itself on living occupants of the frock coat. The memorialized statesman is a sedate, remote, detached, immobile figure. The contemporary statesman, as every one admits, must be in the thick of human affairs. His consideration of details like the Grand Army veteran and the buttermilk vote may not be inscribed on his monument in the park, but it is invariably precise knowledge and pertinent. To expect a statesman to be like his monument, imprisoned on his own elevatedness, is sheer nonsense. No arant politician pays keener regard to human ways and means. Where he differs from the politician is in the quality of his political or social or educational or artistic inspiration. He will "play politics," in the sense that he will look out for popular preferences and prejudices. The thing with which he will not play is the inspiration that sends him ahead. In the heat of a contest the politician and the statesman are both 100 per cent involved. The difference is that the politician feels free to sacrifice the intangible goods for the sake of securing the tangible, while the statesman, equally intent on securing the tangible, takes defeat rather than arrive without his chance to give large inspiration scope. That inspiration cannot be entertained without reference to the public mood, be it "heroic mood" or what not. But where expert solicitation is the chief aim of the politician, with himself and his own fortunes in mind, the statesman is led to solicitation because he has something else at heart.

A WAY with Mr. Delsarte's complicated rules for registering emotion! No fifty-seven varieties of contortion are needed to express even the most delicate shades of feeling. Those masters of the drama, the motion picture producers, have discovered that any internal disturbance can be manifested outwardly by heaving the bosom. This, I believe, explains the exceptionally large number of soft, fat actors who work before the camera; plump persons can put so much more punch into their heaves.

To illustrate the all-round ability of the bosom the operator will unwind a few thousand feet of—oh, let's call it "The Banker's Daughter." First, we have father. He has been speculating with the bank's money and has been fleeced, as he jolly well deserved to be. The day of reckoning is dawning and he hasn't a spare jitney. The forecast is storms, and father feels rotten. (Close up, showing father heaving his bosom.) That's how rotten he feels!

Scheming in his web is the human spider who will offer to save father from the hoose-gow, demanding nothing in re-

consideration of the "inscrutable and arbitrary public." No machine politician ever exhibited a spirit more subservient to "changing whim and taste." If the art of the theatre were the art of window trimming Mr. Belasco would be supreme in his interpretation. He has trimmed his pictures and his stories with superlative regard for public mood. But where that mood has failed the first inspiration of a Belasco author, or Mr. Belasco himself as

author, or his actresses or actors, there has been "revision, blue pencilling or transposition," the utter shamelessness of which only a sincere artist can possibly guess.

"I have always endeavored to be first in the field with plays that are out of the stage's conventional groove and that at the same time appeal to the public's constantly changing taste." In saying this Mr. Belasco raises suspicions as to his own attitude which he

promptly hastens to confirm. What he wants in the theatre is one thing—to appeal to the hearts of his audiences. "People go to the play to have their emotions stirred." It sounds like an innocent generalization, but it is the first commandment in the decalogue of a theatrical "boss."

For it is as a boss Mr. Belasco describes himself. "If I have happened to find a play reasonably suited to the needs of a certain

Heaving the Movie Bosom

By PARKHURST WHITNEY

turn but a mortgage on his home and his daughter's hand in marriage. The fellow is rich; you can tell that by the artercraft furnishing in his luxurious rooms. And he's mean enough to foreclose on his own mother. You don't believe me? Then look! (Close up showing villain heaving his bosom.) That's how mean he is.

See father's only daughter, Clara, playing with her pet dog, Chow Chow. Aren't they having the dearest time? Soon Clara must dress for dinner and the social whirl, but she'd much rather stay at home. Clara cares most for the real, intellectual things of life. If she were not forced to look in at the something-or-other's dinner dance this evening she would do something really worth while, perhaps teach Chow Chow a new trick. But she must go, though society is sure a bore. (Operator, give us a hundred feet of Clara heaving a bored bosom.)

This is Julius, the hero. Yes, I am

sure he is the hero, because he is so nice and plump and because he wears his sport shirt décolleté and his hair plastered back from his forehead. He has just returned from his rough work in the foundry; for Julius, as you can tell at a glance, is one of the world's workers, a strong, masterful, masculine man. Of course, his first act as he enters his humble room is to seize Clara's picture on his humble dresser.

Now, if you would know what the grand passion really is, watch Julius in the close up. There! Isn't he grand? No, he isn't going to moo, though I'm not surprised that you ask. But see his bosom heave. Some love, what?

And so it goes through thousands of feet of film. Father heaves a sad bosom when the human spider puts the screws on and buys Clara for \$50,000 and a first mortgage on the home. The villain heaves a gloating bosom when he puts the dastardly deal across. Clara heaves a fainting bosom when the terrible news

is broken to her, and Julius, heaving dazed bosoms, nearly busts the last and only buttoned button on his shirt.

Clara heaves a scornful bosom when she repulses the amorous advances of the black-hearted snake who has bought her hand, but not her heart. Father heaves a broken hearted bosom when he sees the evil he has brought upon his hitherto happy home. The villain heaves a sneering bosom when he and Julius meet, and Julius, his proud spirit uncrowned, heaves back a hating bosom. The comedy Irish cook does her bit, and so does the comedy English butler, and I'm only surprised that little Chow Chow isn't roped in for a performance with his abdominal muscles.

There's a perfect orgy of heaving at the climax, when the villain dashes over a cliff in his automobile on the very day of the wedding. This scene begins with the scoundrel's dying heave, which lifts the upturned automobile three feet, and concludes with a fadeaway of Clara and Julius, their two bosoms heaving as one.

I warn persons susceptible to sea sickness to stay away from the movies; the English Channel is a millpond compared to the heaving films.

star I have been obliged either to rewrite or have it rewritten by the author." Every detail of a play which I intend to produce I analyze and debate pro and con with the author." Consider an Ibsen under these circumstances, dealing with a manager whose idea of realism is this: "To get the right feeling for 'The Man Inside' I engaged Chuck Connor, a Bowery denizen, now dead, to take on a slumming tour among Chinese opium joints, and I even went down near the Times prison at 2 a. m. to listen to the sounds in the vicinity, such as the bells striking the hours. Both as playwright and producer I am a realist, but I do not believe in harrowing audiences unnecessarily." It is with his words of lighting, however, that Mr. Belasco best reveals his idea of the theatre. "It is much easier to appeal to audiences through their senses than through their intellects." Lights are to drama what music is to the lyrics of a song. No other factor which enters into the production of a play is so effective in conveying its moods and feeling. They are as essential to every work of dramatic art as blood is to life. The greatest part of my success in the theatre I attribute to my feeling for colors, translated into effects of light. Sometimes these effects have been imitated by other producers with considerable success, but I do not fear such encroachments. It may be possible for others to copy my colors, but no one can get my feeling for them." The same feeling extends to costumes, though "I try not to dilute too much in the matter of dresses for actresses."

These passages illustrate Mr. Belasco's attitude toward the public. It is essentially the attitude of the faker, the patent medicine man. So far as the theatre inside is concerned, Mr. Belasco has had success, but most of the time he has failed where the cheaper politician fails. He has been content with plausible lies. "During the performance I never sit in the audience, but stand in the entrances to the stage—watching, directing, trying to quell nervousness and to inspire confidence. I constantly tell my people of reports that I have heard from the front of the theatre, though really I have heard nothing, for I cut myself off completely from the first-night audience." It is a symbol of Mr. Belasco's relation to the public as a producer of plays. He tells his public of reports that he has heard of the beauty and wonder and tragedy of life, though really he has heard nothing.